

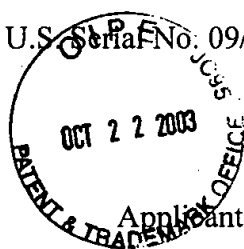
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TC 1700

U.S. Patent No. 09/581,978

-1-

Art Unit 1732



In the Claims

Applicant has submitted a new complete claim set showing marked up claims with insertions indicated by underlining and deletions indicated by strikeouts and/or double bracketing.

Please amend pending claim 21 as noted below.

1-20 (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) A method of making an item of footwear, the method comprising the steps of:

forming an upper for the item of footwear on a forming last, the forming last including a body having the general shape of a foot around which the upper of the footwear item is formed in a series of separate operations, the last body having a base corresponding to a sole of the foot shape;

providing an apparatus having a plurality of separate workstations for performing discrete footwear fabrication operations, including a moulding workstation for moulding a rubber sole;

removably mounting the forming last ~~with the formed upper thereon~~ on the apparatus ~~[[;]]~~ and moving the last ~~with the formed upper thereon~~ sequentially through the plurality of separate workstations to complete the upper before moving the last with the formed upper thereon to the moulding workstation; and

moulding a rubber sole onto the formed upper while it is still mounted on the forming last, the forming last being heated before and/or during the moulding step,

wherein the step of heating the forming last includes heating the base of the last body, whilst substantially preventing the heating of parts of the body other than the base.

22-40 (Cancelled)

41. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the step of forming the upper on the last in said series of operations includes providing the upper with a base to which the rubber sole is to be attached.

42. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the step of moving the last with the formed upper thereon to a moulding workstation comprises rotating a turntable of the apparatus on which the last has been mounted.

43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein:
the base of the last includes at least one metal plate member extending at least partially over the base of the last body to which heat is transmissible from heating means located within the last, such that the step of heating the forming last comprises heating the at least one metal plate member; and

the last includes insulation means between the at least one metal plate member and the rest of the last body to substantially prevent heating of parts of the body other than the base.

45. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 44, wherein the heating means includes at least one electrically activated heating element located inside the last adjacent an inner surface of said at least one plate member, and the step of heating the base of the last includes activating the at least one heating element.

46. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 45, wherein the forming last includes an electric terminal at a top surface thereof for electrically connecting the at least one heating element to a power supply, and wherein the step of mounting the last on the apparatus includes engaging the terminal in a bayonet type coupling to connect the heating elements to the power supply.

47. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the last body includes a heel portion and a toe portion, the heel portion and the toe portion being separable from one another, the method including the step of separating the heel portion and the toe portion of the last to facilitate removal of a finished item of footwear.

48. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the step of moulding the rubber sole includes:

placing the last with the upper thereon adjacent a mould assembly having a plurality of mould parts;

arranging the mould parts adjacent the base of the last and the upper thereon to define a mould cavity for the rubber sole;

injecting rubber into the cavity; and

applying heat and pressure to the rubber in the cavity to form the sole in adherence with the upper.

49. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 48, including the step of heating the mould parts at least one of before and during formation of the rubber sole to vulcanise the rubber.

50-54. (Canceled)